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SOURCE Rybnoye Khozyaystvo, Vol 25, No 10, 1949.RESTORATION OF ARAL SEA FISHING

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At present, commercial fish resources in the Aral Sea are limited in size because of unfavorable conditions for reproduction. Although a great deal of work has been done to improve habitat conditions during the past few years, remedial and conservation measures are not enough to insure high and stable fish catches. For this reason it is necessary to organize technical improvements in the industry.

The Aral Sea contains 20 varieties of fish, 13 of which have commercial value. The three basic commercial varieties are bream, carp, and Caspian roach. Barbel and carp *Abramis sapa* are caught in considerably smaller quantities. The number of predatory fish is small.

Although the quality of benthos in the Aral Sea is lower than that of other southern seas, the sea could still feed more fish than it does. In the central Caspian Sea, the biological mass of benthos (47.5 grams per square meter) is 2.1 times higher than in the Aral Sea (22 grams per square meter), but the catch of benthos-eating fish per hectare in the Caspian is 7.7 times greater than in the Aral Sea.

In 1946 and 1947, commercial varieties of fish caught in the Aral Sea were: bream (28 percent in 1946, 32.5 percent in 1947); carp (16.9 percent in 1946, 13.2 percent in 1947); Caspian roach (15.2 percent in 1946, 20.8 percent in 1947).

The other varieties--pike-perch, small carp, small bream, sheatfish, small sheatfish, carp *Aspius*, pike, barbel, carp *Alburnus chalcoides*, carp *Abramis sapa*, and various small fry -- constituted 1 to 8 percent of the catch during both years.

Most fish catching is concentrated along the shore and goes on during the second quarter of the year, primarily during April and May. In some years it has exceeded 52 percent of the yearly catch, a fact which has several unfavorable

- 1 -

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results. First, bream, carp, and roach suffer during the second quarter and lose 10-25 percent of their weight from February to May. Catching them at this time reduces the amount of the fish catch considerably. Secondly, the temperature is very warm during this time so that a considerable part of the fish caught in distant places is left at the place of processing and spoils or becomes third-grade produce. Thirdly, the fish are not yet full-grown but are caught at a time when they are beginning to gain weight rapidly. Fourthly, intense fishing in April, May, and June results in excess usage of net cordage and insufficient usage of nets made from tanned ephedra.

Intensive fishing during the second quarter being highly undesirable, it is therefore necessary that fishing during the fourth and first quarters be increased. The fishing industry will then actually be able to produce a larger quantity of high-grade products and considerably decrease the use of net cordage. Both the South and North Aral Fish Trusts will be affected by a change in the period of maximum fish catch.

Another measure to improve the organization of Aral fish catching is to change the fishing equipment used. The basic equipment at present consists of fixed and trap nets; seines are used very little. In the future greater use will be made of seine and net catching under ice and of floating and bottom nets.

Fish catching in the fourth and first quarters is not expensive to develop and for this reason can be easily put into practice, particularly since Aral fishermen have already mastered the mechanics of fishing under ice and know the main locations of winter fish resources.

All the proposed measures should be accompanied by careful safeguarding of commercial fish resources, since fish-catching laws in the Aral Sea are often violated. Wider development of remedial measures to restore the spawning grounds for bream should also be carried out.

Partial restoration of Aral Sea fishing is expected to increase the fish catch by 15 percent. In the future, however, after the restoration of the fishing industry and after careful observance of fishing laws and remedial measures in regard to the spawning grounds have been realized, the fish catch can be increased one and a half times.

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- 2 -

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